

Tuesday Evening Bible Study at Tokyo Baptist Church
The Letter to the Hebrews – Chapter 13, Verses 1-6
Notes From Class on May 18, 2010
Last Revised on (May 23, 2010)

Songs

Singing led by Ricky Johnson

Wayne Dawson on piano

Concerning the Future of this Class

As you know, we are nearing the end of our study of the New Testament book of Hebrews.

Tonight we will begin the **final** Chapter.

I expect we will finish within the next **two** or **three** weeks.

By now almost all of you have completed one or both of the questionnaires that I distributed regarding what this class should do **next**.

Some of you have also expressed your preferences to me **verbally**.

I have tried to summarize **all** of your feedback on the sheet I have just handed out. Please have a look.

Based on these results, with TBC's permission, and by God's grace, we **will** continue meeting.

And we will continue meeting on **Tuesday** evening from 7:30 until 9:00 p.m.

And we will make every effort to begin and end **on time**.

We will begin each class by singing approximately **3** hymns, more or less depending on length.

We may spend a little less **time** reviewing at the start of each class, than we have done in the past, and we will try to find more efficient **ways** to review, but we will continue to review quite a lot at the **beginning** of each class.

Somewhat to my surprise, most of you **like** the review, and the review is always good for newcomers.

Also I hope the review will make it easier for us to invite **new** people to join the class after we get going.

We will also, based on survey results, allow and encourage a little bit more classroom discussion, with the proviso that all such discussion be **clear** and easily and understood by

all, including those requiring translation, and that all discussion during class be relevant to the **text** we are studying.

After carefully reviewing the survey data, speaking with many of you, and prayerfully considering this, and discussing it with Dennis and Judi Folds, I have concluded that we should study **Romans** in this class.

More than the summary data show, this class is at **least** equally anxious to study Revelation.

Quite a few of the people who said "Yes" to both books have a marginal preference for **Revelation**.

However Romans is better for **this** class, taken as a whole. I am pretty sure.

An **additional** study on Revelation, on some other day, is something I am willing to consider, possibly on Saturday or Sunday evening. Let's continue discussing this, those of you who are interested.

I propose to begin the new **Romans** study on the first Tuesday in July, which is July 6.

That will probably give us a break of about **three weeks** between the end of Hebrews and the beginning of Romans.

The break will be good for me, at least, and probably for some of you also, to get ready for Romans.

Please help me to spread the word about the new study! Please invite your friends to attend it.

Are there any questions before we get started?

OK then, please get your coffee and your tea and your handouts and other stuff you need now, and after you are settled, we will get started.

Prayer

Dear God.

Thank you so much for this beautiful day.

Thank you for this place where we can gather to study your word together.

Thank you for your Word, spoken to us. finally and perfectly in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank you for being with us throughout the study of Hebrews now winding down.

We pray that we have made the right decisions regarding the future of our class and that you will continue to guide and protect our study going forward.

By your leave, Lord, we will be studying Romans.

We know it is an important and difficult book. We beg you to help us through it.

Please let everything that happens here build us up, and build up this church.

We ask all of these things in Jesus' Name.

Amen

Review *(Hand out paper with with review of the first 11 chapters)*

Tonight rather than reviewing everything from the beginning of Hebrews, I will once again hand out to you, my one-page written summary of the first 11 chapters of Hebrews.

Q. Does everybody have one now?!

Please take just a minute and read through it.

The **overall** summary and conclusion of these first **11** chapters, it seems to me, is that Christians should hold fast to their faith in Christ until the end, despite all of the troubles which they encounter in this world.

Please direct your attention to the beginning of **Chapter 12** and follow along with me as I review this chapter in more detail.

Inspired by the great heroes of faith described in Chapter 11, which he describes as a great **cloud** of witnesses, the preacher now urges Christians to set aside their **sin** and other **unnecessary** baggage and to run the race set before them with **endurance**. **(12:1)**

He encourages the church also, and especially, to consider **Jesus**, who is the origin, and object, and only perfect example of faith, he who endured the shame and suffering of the **cross** because of the joy set before him. We are invited to do **likewise!** **(12: 2-3)**

The preacher reminds those to whom he is speaking that they, like most of us, have not really suffered so much. We have not even resisted, yet, to point of shedding our blood. **(12:4)**

Furthermore all the suffering that we Christians **have** endured, had been for our **benefit**.

God is treating us as his **sons** (and daughters) and preparing us for eternity **(12:5-8)**

How **dare** we despise God

Our **earthly** fathers discipline us and we respect **them**. We should be infinitely more ready to give respect and gratitude to **God** for the discipline we receive from him, which is all perfectly good for us, even though it is unpleasant as we are going through it. The reward comes later...in eternity. **(12:9-11)**

Knowing what we know, there is no good reason for Christians to be angry with God or discouraged, so we should stop staggering around and run with renewed **vigor**. (12:12)

But we should run **carefully**, watching where we are going (12:13),

cultivating **peace** with others, especially other Christians, and avoiding personal **sins** (12:14)

and we are to have an eye not just to **ourselves**, but to **others**, and to the **church** as a whole (12:15)

It would be tragic if any one of us were to turn **away** from his eternal inheritance in pursuit of earthly pleasure or reward. (12:16)

Because as was seen in the tragic tale of **Esau**, sometimes when we reject our inheritance, it is impossible to get it back again. (12:17)

And our inheritance is very **great**, greater by far even than that promised to Moses on Mt. Sinai.

There God came **down** and gave them the **law** and **earthly** promises. (12:18-21)

But we have been more clearly promised a place in **heaven**. (12: 22-24)

And to us God's has revealed himself in a way that is less **fearful** but more **loving** and gracious

He has revealed himself to us in **Christ**.

Who gave up his **life** to atone for **our** sins.

Who has gone **ahead** to prepare a **place** for us with him in heaven.

We are **already** citizens of heaven, even though it will be a little while before we arrive there and move in.

We must be very **careful** not to **refuse** the place in heaven that God is offering.

We have read of the **earthly** consequences of the refusal of **Cain** and **Esau** and **Israel** to hear God's voice and to obey it.

But now the voice speaks from **heaven**, so there is no **hope** for us if we refuse it. (12:25)

This again reiterates a theme that stretches through **all** of Hebrews.

In the past, in his dealings with men, God shook the **earth!**

In the days to come, he will shake not only the earth but also the **heavens** (12:26)

All of creation will be **removed**.

What **remains** will be the eternal Kingdom of God **(12:27)**

So let's be o so **thankful** for our place in this **unshakable** Kingdom, and **worship** God!
(12:28)

And let's not completely forget his **fearsome** aspect

For our God is a consuming **fire**. **(12:29)**

The only safe place to go is in the direction of God, but the only safe way to go there is in Christ!

Any questions or comments?

Prayer

OK. Before we begin our next reading, let's pray again.

Dear God.

We look forward to the day when only your unshakable kingdom remains.

In the certain hope that Jesus has gone ahead to made a place for us in it.

Please help us to understand and appreciate what you have done for us, out of your great love.

Please let us not forget that, but for Christ, your holiness would consume us.

Please Lord do not let us wander away from the sound of your voice.

Please do not let us hear your voice and refuse it.

Instead make us attentive to every word you say.

Please now open up to us the words we are about to read.

Please protect us from mistakes in our understanding, and in our obedience.

Help us to become not just hearers of your word, O Lord, but doers also.

In Jesus Name we pray.

Amen

Hebrews, Chapter 13, Verses 1-6

OK then, would someone please read Hebrews, Chapter 13, Verses 1-6, in Japanese.

Thank you. Now would someone please read those same verses in English (ESV).

1 Let brotherly love continue.

2 Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

3 Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.

4 Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

5 Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

6 So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"

Thank you.

The main message of Hebrews was more or less concluded at the end of Chapter 12.

Again, a **place** has been prepared for Christians in the unshakable kingdom to come.

We must therefore **stay the course**.

Holding on to our **faith** until the **end**, and despite whatever difficulty.

But this prospect has **ethical** implications as well,

implications for our behavior in the **here** and **now**.

Just as Paul and the other New Testament authors have **also** so frequently pointed out.

Here in Hebrews, the preacher's catalog of ethical injunctions is a little less **systematic** and a little less **complete** than what we find elsewhere in the New Testament.

But what we find here is completely **consistent** with these other teachings..

Notice, here again, as we did when we began this study, that Hebrews sort of **ends** like a letter, even though it does not **begin** like a letter, and generally **reads** more like a **sermon** than a letter.

As to **why** this may be the case, there is no perfect answer.

We discussed this in the general **introduction** to our study of Hebrews and will not return to such things now.

Please note, however, that all of the notes for this class, from the very beginning are available on the internet, on the google group site. So please feel free to go back and review things that interest you.

The preachers closing exhortation begins in Verse 1, which reads...

(Verse 1)

Let brotherly love continue.

Love is the **most** characteristic expression of a saved soul.

Particularly love for other **believers**. (Which **is** love for Him in whom they believe.)

It is hard to think of a message that is proclaimed more **consistently** throughout the whole Bible.

And no doubt Satan's chief line of **attack** is to **disrupt** and **distort** and **contaminate** such love.

At least that is how he very often attacks **me**!

So the Holy **Spirit** through the **Word** of God here speaks to **remind** us of **who** we are and what we **do**: we **love**!

We love as **brothers** and **sisters** love one another --- as beings of the same **flesh** and **parentage**.

But the bond between **believers** is stronger than the bond between mere brothers and sisters--
- what we have in common is the Holy **Spirit**, the father we share is **God** Almighty, our eldest brother is **Christ**

It is important that you and I remember that we **ARE** brothers and sisters in Christ, children of the living God, united in the One Spirit who dwells within us.

when we treat each other **badly**, it means we have **forgotten** who we are.

When we truly **remember** who we are, then we **treat** one another accordingly.

But our love must not stop with those Christians who are **near** to us and who are **like** us

Neither must our love stop with **Christians**...

Verse 2 reads...

(Verse 2)

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Those who are strangers among us, demand our **special** attention.

We must invite them into our **homes** and **feed** them and **cloth** them and tend to their **injuries**, and **protect** them, even at considerable **cost** and **risk** and **danger** to ourselves.

Even the **pagans** knew this, and many non-Christian cultures have been and are **very** hospitable

How utterly **tragic** it is when the children of the king are less hospitable.

This is the **point** of the parable of the Good Samaritan,

that we must **love** our **neighbor** as **ourselves**,

and that **everyone** who is **alive** in the world today **is** our neighbor (Calvin)

Here (in verse 2) the preacher almost certainly has in mind **Abraham** and Lot who displayed such hospitality and did, indeed, discover that they had entertained angels unawares.

He may also have in mind additional, similar, stories from the Old Testament.

The idea that we are **obligated** to care for strangers and often **blessed** for doing so is very deeply rooted in the thought of both Jews and Christians.

Q. Do you think that we, too, might actually entertain angels unaware?

A. Figuratively we do, certainly.

Think of your **own** experiences. Of course if you have much practice with hospitality you will also have had some **bad** experiences too, but it is amazing how often those to whom you reach out to help prove to be a **blessing** to you in the most surprising ways.

A. Literally we might, possibly. I have heard and read such stories. Perhaps you have too.

A. In any case, there there is something more important to notice here: Jesus taught us that **whenever** we do even the **smallest** kindness we are doing it unto **HIM!**

That is, as often as we are hospitable, we are being hospitable to the **Son of God**, and to God himself and such kindnesses are actually rewarded.

This is amazing grace!

There is, in fact, **nothing** you can do **for** God.

He owns the cattle on a thousand hills.

He can make an unmake galaxies with a word.

What would you do for **God**?!

There is only one thing you can do: love and obey him, and therefore show brotherly **love** and **hospitality** to your fellow **man**.

OK, then, when the preacher exhorts them to show hospitality and brotherly love, he is merely reminding them to continue being what they hopefully **already** are, brothers of Christ and children of the living God.

We must, therefore, not confine our attention to brothers **close** at hand or even to strangers **amongst** us who demand our hospitality,

We must have a thought to people everywhere who are in need of us.

Verse 3 reminds us to ...

(Verse 3)

Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.

Those who are out of **sight**, should not be out of **mind**.

Rather those who are literally or figuratively **in prison** should be remembered, just as if we were actually there, in prison, with them.

Of **course**, and why not?!

Why should those who are **isolated** and **alone** be **less** deserving of hospitality or brotherly love!?

Likewise why should those who are otherwise **mistreated** be less deserving of our attention?

They should **NOT**!

And yet they all too often **are** --- may God forgive us! --- and so the preacher reminds them of the full **extent** of their obligations of love and hospitality.

The final clause, "since you are also in the body," has been interpreted in various ways.

At least we are to understand that there is **nothing** about isolation or mistreatment which could possibly **dissolve** the bonds of brotherly love and hospitality which connect us to other human beings and to other believers in particular.

We are **all** still alive on this earth, in the body, and united by our common humanity.

Those who suffer are not **less** human, no **less** deserving of our compassion.

There may or may not be a reference here to the "body of Christ" and those who have suffered **for the faith**.

Such heroes of the faith would certainly **not** be any **less** entitled to the compassion we owe to all.

This, then, is the first ethical injunction that the preacher hammers out: brotherly love and hospitality to all who inhabit the planet.

And while we tarry in this world, the children of God are **also** expected to have a well-regulated **sex** life.

I presume this was an **issue** among those who the preacher is addressing, just as it is an issue among **us** and all human beings who have ever lived, and this is another area in which Satan so easily attacks us.

Verse 4 reads ...

(Verse 4)

Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

The first clause can possibly be read in **two** ways.

It can mean that we are to **honor** marriages --- i.e. as a command for husbands and wives to remain faithful to one another and for the relationships of husbands and wives to be protected and preserved by others in the community.

Or it can mean that marriage is, in and of itself, and among all, an honorable **estate**.

The second reading **implies** the first --- i.e. if marriage is an honorable thing in itself, then of course husbands and wives should remain faithful to one another and third parties should not disrupt the relationships between husbands and wives.

But the second reading says **more** than that. It says that the institution of marriage, **itself**, is desirable and good and should not be despised or set aside as something intended for only

some people, and certainly not as something intended for only those who are **less** honorable among us.

Do you see it?

This passage has been cited by those who object to the celibate **priesthood** in the Roman Catholic Church, for example.

However you read the **first** clause, the second clause is **clear**.

Sexual relations **between** a husband and a wife are to be **pure**.

This is understood to include that they only have sex with one another, but it is probably also understood to include the idea that the sexual relations **between** the husband and the wife are pure.

I wouldn't want to think too much now about what that actually means, but just for example, the relations between a Christian husband and wife should **not** be **abusive** or **degrading** or otherwise **ungodly**.

The first two clauses may also imply that only husbands and wives should **have** sex --- i.e. and that there should be **no** sex (no marriage bed) between unmarried people.

But the third clause certainly **does** mean to include that.

The term **adultery** is clear enough.

The term here translated "**sexual immorality**" is rendered "**fornication**" in other translations.

This is understood to include **premarital** and **extramarital** sex and **other** impure sex acts.

Again, I have no inclination to discuss this in much detail, but it does seem, here and elsewhere in the Bible, that marriage is being held out as the honorable thing to do for **most** people, at least in part as being the most effective remedy for the general tendency of **almost** all people, men and women, to sin sexually, one way or another.

By comparison to marriage, it seems, **celibacy** is not so effective in forestalling sexual sin.

And sexual sin is a serious **problem**, both because it is so **pervasive**, and because God **punishes** it.

Another serious problem that the preacher warns Christians about is "**love of money**"

Verse 5 reads:

(Verse 5)

Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

Q. **Why** is love of money a problem?

A. Because it is a substitute for the love of **God** and, also therefore, a substitute for the love of the brothers.

You remember Jesus teaching that man **cannot** serve two masters: to **love** money, is to **hate** God.

It is important to **understand** why this is the case.

Q. Why would a man **love** money?

A. In the most extreme case, I suppose, he may love money pure and simple --- a kind of **fetish**

But that is rarely seen. I mean a rich man who has all of his riches stored in a particular currency that later becomes worthless because of inflation, say, will rarely be seen to love his piles of now worthless currency. That would just be mental illness.

A. men love money because of the **things** that it can **buy**.

And money can buy literally every **thing** that there is: food, shelter, clothing, medicine, sex, education, publicity, power, and so forth.

Money is a store of value. It is a means of exchange. It is **potentially** all of the things for which you can exchange if.

Money ensures that we can later procure the **things** we may need or want. That's **why** we keep money.

When we **don't** have money, we often become afraid that we may not later have all that we need or want.

Money is, therefore, a means of making our **future**, in this world, more secure.

the more we worry about our future in this world, the more we love **money**.

The danger, of course, is that in order to **obtain** money we might be willing to sacrifice things of **heaven**.

For example, we may fail to demonstrate brotherly love and charity and marital fidelity and the other things that are important to God, because these things would leave us with less **money**.

Obedience to God can often be very costly in terms of **money**.

Q. In such cases, what should we do?

A. We should obey **God**, and forget about the **money**, and trust **God** to provide whatever we need in the future.

This is a **hard** teaching, but a **consistent** teaching of both the Old and the New Testament.

When we put ourself at risk through obedience to God, **he** promises to see us through.

Notice that this is an encouragement to obedience and not an **excuse** for **laziness** or **foolishness**.

Nowhere does the Bible encourage us to be lazy or foolish.

It does, however, encourage us to be **generous** and **self-sacrificial**.

So it is not hard to imagine situations in which obedience to **God** would take your **bank** account down pretty low.

But then, with no money in the bank, we will be **really** in the hands of God, which is the safest place we can possibly be.

(Verse 6)

So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"

This does **not** necessarily mean that money will suddenly show up from heaven.

What it **does** mean is that your heavenly **father**, who has all power and knowledge, and who loves you is now in charge of your future! (as indeed he always was)

Whatever happens will be good,

whether or not the **world** sees it that way!

Do you have any questions or comments?

Let's pray

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus

We are taught that we have a place waiting for us in heaven,

not because of anything that we have done or ever could do,

but because of what you have done for us.

Thank you Jesus.

Please help us to stay the course, holding on to our faith until the end.

And please help us to live as Christians should live.

Please forgive us of our sins, fill us with your Spirit, and grow us up to be great men and women of God

Please make us exude brother love and hospitality

Please help us to confine sex to marriage and within marriage to be seemly and pure

Please give help us to be wise and hard working but to have no love of money, preferring instead the things of your eternal kingdom, even when they are costly in the terms of this world.

Please help us to say with confidence, The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me.

We love you Lord and we need you and we need your help to live as we should live.

Please help us.

In Jesus Name we pray.

Amen